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ABSTRACT

Self-instructional materials for the beginning level child welfare worker are provided in this source book. Basic information about hostility, clients who feel threatened, and situations where the worker feels threatened is included. Practice skills for dealing with hostility or feelings of being threatened as experienced by the worker or client are given. The material was designed to be used individually for self-instruction but can be adapted for use in small groups. The source material is divided into several major areas which include understanding crisis and some reasons for hostile or threatened reactions, self-awareness of the worker in the use of authority and in communication in interviewing, and interviewing techniques and methods to be considered in working with hostile, angry, or threatened clients. The role and use of power and authority are discussed, and cross-cultural differences are considered. Finally, the supervisory process is explained and ideas are presented regarding the role and expectations of the supervisee in the interactional process with the supervisor. (NRB)

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WORKING WITH THREATENED/HOSTILE CLIENTS

A SOURCE BOOK

By

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REGION VI CHILD WELFARE TRAINING CENTER
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
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INTRODUCTION

This document was developed to provide the beginning level child welfare worker with a source book of basic information about hostility, clients who feel threatened, and situations where the worker feels threatened. This source book will include some practice skills for dealing with hostility or feelings of being threatened as experienced by the worker or client. The material was designed to be used individually for self instruction but can be adapted for use in small groups. This source material is divided into major areas which include 1) understanding crisis and some reasons for hostile or threatened reactions, 2) self-awareness of the worker in the use of authority and in communications in interviewing and 3) interviewing techniques and methods to be considered in working with hostile, angry or threatened clients.

While there are situations where the client responds in a positive manner, cooperates and progresses toward achievement of mutually agreed upon goals, the job performance by the child welfare worker often includes dealing with people who feel threatened by the worker and the system that they represent. These clients respond negatively, are often angry and hostile. In turn the worker may experience feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, or high stress from what is perceived as a direct rebuttal of his/her work. The reaction to client behavior may result in the worker feeling threatened or hostile. While any number of factors may be related to these reactions it is important that the worker develop the skill and knowledge needed to identify and differentiate reactions. The worker needs to be able to recognize how he/she handles conflict, anger and negative feedback; how to help the client, and how and when to use supervision/consultation when indicated.

The following definitions are used throughout the self-instructional material.

Threatened - the individual or group experiences fear of imminent or future change, endangerment, punishment and real or perceived loss.

Hostile - to be oppositional in feeling, action or character. Characterized by antagonism, anger and resistance. Hostility may be expressed by non-cooperation, withdrawal, direct verbal assaults

or physical attacks.

It is important to note that when clients or workers feel threatened or attacked, resistance and hostility are usual reactions. The proportion of anger and appropriateness of behavior in dealing with conflict are important areas to evaluate before planning intervention strategies. While most of us avoid hostile reactions the child welfare worker should come to recognize this as a routine part of the job.

This manual is intended to provide beginning level workers with access to some functional, theoretical and skill information which can be referred to as the need for such information arises. It is hoped that this manual will stimulate thinking and initiate further inquiry into the complexities of understanding the giving and receiving of help in highly charged situations.

UNIT 1

UNDERSTANDING CRISIS SITUATIONS AND REACTIONS

It is important that each worker review and understand the variety of reactions a crisis situation creates. Individuals vary in personality, specific situational circumstances, and timing of events. However there are some common reactions to stress and crisis which should be considered when a worker responds to a family plagued with chronic problems or reported for abuse or neglect. Generally crisis events tend to produce difficulties in terms of intellectual, emotional and social functioning. The client system in crisis may display disorganized behavior and thinking, poor functioning, hostility, impulsive behavior, dependence or psychiatric problems. The troublesome behavior may be intensified by the clients chronic anger and a continously frustrating environment.

Disorganized Thinking and Behavior

People in crisis may have a difficult time giving information or relating ideas and events in a logical fashion. They may overlook or ignore important details, confuse sequences of events and fail to see environmental factors which may contribute to the problems. The individual may jump from one idea to another in a manner that interrupts communication or repeat the same statement and phrase regardless of the question or comment made by the interviewer. Under severe stress fears and wishes may be confused with reality. Difficulty with memory may be apparent when significant or stressful questions are asked; or the individual may give various responses to the same questions at different points during the interview. The clients' activity may be disorganized and at time aimless. Solutions attempted in resolving problems may seem illogical and poorly thought out. The client may pace constantly, check the door or otherwise act suspiciously. In summary, when a client is in crisis they may not know what to think about the problem or how to evaluate realistically what course of action to take. It is important to note that upon initial intervention the client's disorganization of behavior and thought may be compounded in response to having to deal with an external agent.

Poor or Ineffective Functioning

When confronted with a crisis people tend to become involved in activities that relieve tensions arising from their fears and inability to cope. When too much emphasis is placed on insignificant activities the individual's ability to deal with the crisis is decreased.

For example, the mother who focuses on her favorite soap opera or talks about her activities as a child when questioned about an injury or problem with one of her own children. It is the worker's responsibility to redirect their thinking toward more important activities and assist the client in the development of appropriate behavior. Disorganized thinking and/or behavior are normal in stressful situations. However, there may be indications for psychiatric or other psychological assessments. These indications include:

1. Severe Depression, withdrawn or suicidal behavior
2. Religious or culturally-biased fanaticism that interferes with daily functioning.
3. Drug/alcohol addiction.
4. Bizarre ideas that make little or no sense.
5. Hearing voices or responding to events that are not observable to others.
6. When torture has taken place, such as burning a child over and over in the same place.
7. When planned abuse has occured, such as tying the child to a bed as a method of punishment or locking a closet with a child inside as an ongoing method of dealing with problems.
8. When a particular part of the body is consistently abused such as breaks in the left leg, right arm, etc.
9. When the parent(s)' perception of a situation is distorted or does not make sense, i.e., "my baby hates me," "he is possessed by demons."
10. Inappropriate responses to questions that indicate a loss of affect, i.e., "how are you feeling today?" "I don't feel anything anymore."
11. When family dynamics don't fit or match many or any of the classic family histories, such as poor rearing experiences of the parent(s), isolation, poor sense of self, unrealistic expectation of children, recent life loss such as a job, spouse, personal belongings, etc.

Hostility and Emotional Distance

One response to life crisis is to be hostile to others in the environment. This hostility is often focused on the person intervening in the crisis such as the child welfare worker. In some situations it is important to re-

member that the client perceives the worker or agency to be the cause of the problem or crisis situation. They may resent their need for help or be angry about feeling vulnerable. The major issue in this situation becomes how to use the conflict productively, how to focus negative energy into positive acts. Workers may be greeted with reactions that range from verbal and non-verbal threats to refusal to allow the worker to enter, to assaults with a weapon. While assaults are not the usual reaction, this does occur and workers should be aware of situations in which this may happen. Clues to be aware of include: use of drugs or alcohol, history of violence as indicated in records; severe psychiatric disability and/or escalating anger. Another possible reaction is extreme emotional distance and passivity with the persons withdrawal from the interview or agreement with everything, regardless of what is said. The major question for the worker is "How do I get what I need in this situation?" This depends on the type of intervention needed; for example, the worker who is conducting an investigation may need to be supportive and directive, while the worker who is trying to establish a relationship may want to be supportive and use education techniques in initial intervention.

Impulsivity

The client who is in a crisis may respond to the problems impulsively by taking immediate action without evaluating the connsequences. For example, a neglecting or abusive mother may give custody of the children to the department out of a need to cope without considering the effect placement will have on her children and her rights as a parent. Failure to evaluate the appropriateness of a response may result in further crisis and make a problem more difficult to resolve. Impulsive behavior is often seen in the adolescent client, retarded client, and the client who is emotionally immature.

Dependence

Another reaction to crisis may be dependence on the child welfare worker. This may be a needed phase before the individual can resume independence. The client may continously request assistance with minor problems and repeatedly request assistance with the same problem. This may create a burden on the worker until the client can be helped to regain control of the situation. Methods of dealing with dependence include contracting with the client, positive feedback on success and gradually lessening involvement with the client. When a worker intervenes his power and authority may be

effective tool to be used in stabilizing the impact of the crisis. However, if the client perceives this power as a method of control, feelings of hostility and threats may result. This can be overcome if the client understands the reasons for intervention and response to a crisis situation.

Change and the Creation of Crisis

Family crisis does not cause abuse or neglect which requires outside intervention but can be contributing factors. The issues which cause stress may be a major or minor problem that sets the parent off. It may be a specific event such as loss of a job or it may be a chronic sense of isolation which creates a sense of change.

A careful examination of child welfare records reveals recent changes in a majority of cases such as pregnancy, family member loss, social or economic status change, family constellation, change such as the addition of an elderly parent, divorce, incarceration, etc., new moves to a neighborhood or loss of community resources. The worker should be attuned to life events that contribute to the parent(s)' loss of control. Financial setbacks, illness, marital discord and other family conflicts may represent changes which contribute to the clients needing child welfare services.

Case examples:

> Jennifer, a 3 month old baby was referred after receiving multiple injuries. Her mother admitted to throwing the child against a wall resulting in the injuries. Susan, Jenifer's mother revealed that the family had recently moved from a small rural town where most of her family lived. Robert, her husband, worked a great deal overtime at the local plant where he was employed. At 19 Susan has not made any friends at home because of the extended family network which provided both support and friendships. With the loss of family support and isolation in her new community Susan responded by injuring her child.

Changes in the child as they grow through developmental stages may precipitate crisis for some parents i.e., the mother who says " I got along just fine when my baby was little, but when he started walking and getting into things, I just couldn't manage anymore."

SUMMARY

Crisis may result in many reactions by the client ranging from withdrawal to hostility. When the worker enters a family it is important

to keep in mind several pointers:

1. When in crisis the client or individual may not respond appropriately to intervention. This may produce:
   a. anger, threats, hostility
   b. withdrawal, refusal to cooperate
   c. poor or inadequate decision-making
   d. activities which compound rather than alleviate problems
   e. inability to provide basic information
   f. emotional distance
   g. dependence or overdependence
2. When social work intervention occurs involuntarily it may exaggerate the clients' reaction to the worker.
3. Further evaluations may be useful in evaluating the client in a less "charged" atmosphere, and finally,
4. The use of authority in a crisis situation can be helpful in providing structure for the client, however too much authority may anger the client and create distance.

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UNIT 2

AREAS IN WHICH CLIENTS AND/OR WORKERS FEEL THREATENED

Hostility, anger and withdrawal are common reactions that occur when either individuals or groups feel threatened. As workers in the child welfare system there will be many occasions when you will have personal experiences of feeling threatened and/or being perceived as threatening by your clients.

Specific child welfare interventions that result in the client feeling threatened or fearful of loss are:

Investigating complaints of a suspected child abuser

Removing children from the home

Returning children to the home

Supervising a home for protective services

Situations involving other individuals that may result in the worker and/or client feeling threatened:

Contact with the legal system and its representatives, i.e., judges, attorneys

Referral to other social service agencies, i.e., mental health service

Work with biological parents

Work with foster parents

General areas in which the client or worker feel threatened

Intrapsychically - Whenever there is a threat to one's sense of well being, to one's feeling of being in control, there may develop feelings of discomfort, generalized uneasiness, worry, or in other words, anxiety. This anxiety may be manifested as a diffused, unpleasant sense of apprehension or fearfulness stemming from some unidentifiable danger. All of us react this way when placed in a new or unknown situation which may be considered threatening. Anxiety, depression, withdrawal or other expressions of disturbed affective states are likely to accompany the problems so prevalent in our clients' life experiences. Particularly when the social worker intervenes at the request of other than the client himself or herself, that client can hardly be expected to remain unperturbed. He may feel fearful of being controlled, of losing his control over others, children, spouse, and of the loss of status because of being involved with the welfare system.

Actually the client may act out his feelings in a number of ways, usually identifiable as reactive distress on the basis of the inappropriateness of the behavior. In problems of reactive emotional distress, the client's major concern is with his feelings themselves rather than the situation which may have

given rise to them, and therefore is unable to speak logically or at times coherently about the situation.

A beginning social worker, quite naturally, experiences some anxiety in his initial encounter with the client regardless of the effort involved in pre-encounter preparation. The anxiety merely indicates that the worker recognizes the importance of the encounter. Experienced workers also experience anxiety when meeting a client for the first time, but usually on a lesser scale. While initial anxiety can be overwhelming, as the worker increases her experience and gains confidence in her abilities to perform as a social worker, it is controlled and dissipated.

As social workers we must care about our clients. When we are comfortable in the presence of another, it is fairly easy to begin to sort out our feelings, that is, we begin to like the other and to separate any objections we have to them as people. In the usual course of events we are able to reach a level of caring for the other appropriate to the situation. In the presence of physical abuse, of battering parents, or of other violence, our reactions are not altogether voluntary and deliberate, and the worker may feel emotional distress. Although other situations of less violence may evoke feelings of less intensity, the worker's feelings may distract her from the demands of her immediate responsibilities.

One of the major pitfalls for protective service workers is their use of denial and the resultant failure of the worker to permit the parent to talk about the problem. The worker may be so uncomfortable with having to face children with serious injuries, and the fact that a parent has inflicted them, that he blocks out all attempts of the parent to talk about his feelings. Denial continues when the abusing parent has suffered much pain in her life, the worker becomes so fearful of inflicting more pain that she retreats and fails to pursue anxiety producing material. In her attempt to avoid her own discomfort, the worker may help provide the parent with excuses for the child's injuries.

Battering parents who injure their children are usually overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and inadequacy. If the parent is unable to drain the guilt and anxiety away, it remains to fester inside until it erupts in another attack on the child. These parents need to talk about the experience with a nonjudgemental, accepting person. The catharsis the parent experiences relieves and releases the pain. It is crucial that caseworkers help parents get through this painful experience. In order to do so, the worker must genuinely care about parents as well

as children, and be comfortable enough with himself to be able to permit the parent to spew forth the horror inside him.

A second pitfall occurs when the worker identifies so closely with the injured child that her hostility toward the parent is readily apparent. She assumes the role of interrogator and thereby threaten parents so that they are unable to share their problems with her.

A third pitfall is when immediate removal from the home is required for children who are victims of sadistic-psychotic abuse. The worker becomes so convinced of her omnipotence as a helper that she risks a child's life to boost her own ego.

These are reactions of intrapsychic discomfort or conflict as either worker or client is trying to maintain a feeling of adequacy and control over the environment.

Interpersonally - If individuals are unsure, or uncomfortable about their own social skills, their ability to communicate their feelings and thoughts accurately or even their overall performance as measured against others, they may experience feelings of being threatened, and such feelings are reflected in their interactions with others and their social functioning. When the worker has feelings of uncertainty the resultant behavior may reflect the use of either too much or too little authority. She may also be unable to concentrate on control of the interview situation. The client then picks up on these feelings and she may react as being withdrawn, angry, over cooperative or too talkative. So client and worker both must deal with their feelings engendered by working with and in the child welfare system.

Words, of course, are a basic tool in the interaction between the worker and the client, but it is not only the words, it is also the tone of voice, the gestures, the feelings which affect the exchange process. Words as they express feelings provoke various reactions; verbal abuse provokes anger or withdrawal; lying provokes resentment or chagrin; anger, hostile feelings. In the unique world of social work, however, the common "human" response is not allowed; the social worker must react in a controlled manner, a decision which must be made in preencounter preparation.

It is also important for you, the worker, to be aware of how your behavior can increase the client's feelings of anger and hostility. Every worker has experienced times when her caseload became unmanageable, either because of the number of cases requiring some action or from the number of families, who were all in crisis at the same time. During these times it is quite easy to work on those cases requiring immediate action such as a court hearing, or locating a run-away, and "forget"

promises you, the worker, have made to a client especially if your client is a child. Failing to keep promises such as:

- To set up a visit for your client, a child, with his siblings or parents
- To follow up on locating a deserting father, even after your client, the mother, has notified you where he is
- To schedule needed specialized doctors' or dental appointments for children in your care
- To tell a client that you would be checking out the information that she has given you by talking to her boss, neighbors, etc.
- To inform the client that you would be several hours late for an appointment, or even worse forget to cancel an appointment
- To make an appointment and "just drop in" for an important visit
- To include your clients, especially children, in the decision-making process
- To treat your clients as professionally as you do other important professionals such as judges, psychiatrists, supervisors
- And others

As a worker, you become as important person to your client, and therefore how you treat the client can affect realistically how she feels toward you. As a child welfare worker you may have to help clients confront things about their behavior which they must change in order to either keep their children or to have the children returned to them. However, most interactions with clients are not so negative, and how you conduct your professional responsibilities, and "human frailties" may justify the client's being very angry or "mad" at you. In a situation where you have failed to follow through on your part of the contract or promises that you have made, it is important that you acknowledge that you did "goof up" or that you failed to keep a promise, and explain the reasons honestly why you didn't follow through as planned. It is also helpful to acknowledge that your client has every right to be upset, angry, mad, or what ever feelings he seems to be having, and that you plan to try and avoid something like this happening again in the future. It is important to remember that not all anger or hostile behavior of clients is unwarranted.

Environmentally - Both clients and worker may experience feelings of threat and insecurity, when they meet on the other's territory. For example, when the worker is required to go to a neighborhood that is economically or ethnically different from the worker's neighborhood she may feel some fear of the new/or different environment. The same is true for the client who must come to the child welfare office to visit the worker. The client may have feelings of anxiety, shame and/or alienation from "the worker's environment" and may express these feelings in an attempt to cope with the situation.

Environmental factors can affect how both client and workers experience feelings of threat or anxiety. The worker may feel quite comfortable meeting with the client in her office where she feels she has control over the environment. However, the client may feel most anxious or threatened just by being in a strange, large, impersonal environment as is true of most state agencies. On the other hand, the client may feel less anxious talking with the worker in her own home, which is located in a large urban public housing project, where the worker may feel very threatened or even concerned for her personal safety.

There are, of course, as many possibilities for creating a hostile, threatening situation as there are combinations of worker-client, worker-other, client-other. The handling of the various situations remains essentially the same.

Describe a recent interview with a hostile client.
Did you feel threatened?
How did you handle your feelings?
How did you handle the client's feelings?
Did anything positive occur?
Would you do anything differently now that you have read this material?
If yes, what?

UNIT 3

INVOLUNTARY VS VOLUNTARY CLIENT SYSTEMS

Investigation and Interviewing

It is basic to the humanitarian value of social work practice that service be available to all who are in need. Traditionally, the treatment process is set in motion when someone decides he has a social or phychological problem for which he desires help and he acts on the feeling by contacting a social agency. His contact is a voluntary one. Most often clients who see social workers because of child welfare problems have been referred or in some way required to be serviced. They are involuntary clients. It has been determined by someone else that this clinet would benefit from the intervetnion of a social worker.

Client self determination is the practical recognition of the right and need of clients to dreedom in making their own choices and decisions in the child welfare process. This right is limited by the clients' capacity for constructive decision making, by the law and by the agency functions. In actual practice, the social worker evaluates a client's situation and set intervention goald based on that evaluation. It is urgent that the worker be aware of the problems involved in working with a clinet who did not consciously choose to be "helped" and in establishing goals that go beyong the clients' wishes.

Prior to the first contact the worker may need to review his repertoire of skills and select the approach to use with a new clinet with which he is most comfortable. More specifically, review interviewing techniques which are essential in establishing the relationship. Many times the worker is judged by the client on the basis of the initial interview and subsequent contact reflects the positive or negative reaction of the client to the worker.

Interviewing techniques can be non-directive or directive. Non-directive techniques include: head nods, smiles, frowns, eye contact, and body posture/ gestures indicating that the listener is responsive to what the speaker is saying. They include minimal verbal exchanges such as "yes", "I understand", "I see", "um", "hum", etc. They may also include verbal 'follows'. In verbal 'follows', the listener simply repeats a key word that the speaker has used in a statement to demonstrate attentiveness. Verbal follows may also be directive if the word is repeated in questioning tone, indicating that the listener wants clarification in that particular area. Verbal follows may be used to get the speaker back on the

track. They may steer the speaker in the direction the listener wants him/her to go.

Non-directive techniques can be powerful means of expressing empathy. They tell the speaker that the listener is tuned into the speaker's feelings and concerns. The skilled use of non-directive techniques, combined with the more directive, assertive interviewing techniques convey positive regard even when facing a client with unpleasant truths.

Clients in the child welfare system often enter the agency on an involuntary basis. Either they come to the agency as a last resort, are referred or enter due to legal and/or community requests. Often the client would prefer not to talk about the reasons they have become involved with the agency. This may be especially true in early contacts. Once a relationship is formed information may be given more freely and clients will talk about themselves and their problems. In working with involuntary clients workers must assume the responsibility for the direction of interviewing. This requires the use of directive techniques which are summarized below.

Assertive Interviewing Techniques

it is important that workers not confuse assertive interviewing with agressive interviewing. In assertive interviewing the caseworker acts with authority. In aggressive interviewing the caseworker acts with authoritarianism. The first is from a non-defensive stance. Assertive interviewing implies an understanding of one's right to intervene in family dynamics in order to protect a child. It also assumes a respect for the parent of the child as a worthwhile individual whose concerns will be listened to but whose actions, in regard to treatment of the child must change. Assertive techniques include:

1. Active listening: It is important that the caseworker focus on what the client is saying. The worker listens to the client rather than focusing on concerns about how the caseworker will respond. To let the client know the worker is listening, from time to time, the worker states in his/her own words what he/she thinks he/she has heard. This technique is called reflection of content. For example:

   Mother: Mary is my problem. She isn't as grown up as she wants you to think. She's got a mind of her own and does she know it! She thinks she has the answer to everything. If I make a suggestion she always finds some reason it won't work.

Worker: Mary won't follow your suggestions.

OR

Mary: Everything I do around her is wrong. My mother nags, nags, nags. Nothing ever works. It's all my fault.

Worker: Your mother constantly finds fault with what you do.

Another technique is the reflection of feeling in what is stated. The workers response to the mother might have been

Worker: You are frustrated because Mary won't follow your suggestions

OR to Mary

Worker: You are angry because your mother constantly finds fault with what you do.

Reflection is especially helpful in trust binding. If the worker accurately reflects what the client has said, the message is conveyed that what was said was important. If the reflection is not what the client really meant, he/she had been given the opportunity to clarify for the worker. The worker has trusted the client enough to risk being wrong in stating his/her perceptions.

Reflection skills are especially valuable at the beginning of an interaction because they are trust building. They are also helpful when the speaker is angry or defensive. Reflection tells the client that the worker tries to know his/her point of view but only he/she knows what is and must clarify what it is.

2. Confrontation: In child welfare services, the worker must be a skilled confronter. Confrontation is, basically, facing the clients with the facts in the situation and with the probable consequences of behaviors.

Client: The doctor is telling lies about me. I didn't hurt Angie, she fell downstairs. She is always having accidents.

Worker: I understand that children have accidents. Angie's injuries could not have been the result of a fall down stairs. There are two partially healed fractures in addition to the new head injury. Angie's buttocks and back are marked with bruises in the shape of a hand.

Client: I know we haven't been to counseling in three weeks. Get off my back! My husband and I have other things to do.

Worker: Going to counseling regularly is a part of your agreement with us to regain conservatorship of children. If the agreement is

not followed, we can't recommend that the children come home. Or confrontation may be tempered with reflection which puts the client less on the defensive.

Worker: I know it is difficult to get into counseling. However, getting there is necessary if we are to recommend return of the children in our agreed time limit.

Questioning Techniques

Asking questions effectively is an essential skill in the child protective services interviewing. There are two general types of questions. Closed-ended questions are those that can be answered with "yes", or "no", or a brief word or phrase. They are used to structure conversation and to get to the point quickly.

Worker: Who was there when Angie fell?

Client: No one.

Worker: Where were you at the time?

Client: In the kitchen.

Worker: Did you hear her fall?

Client: Yes.

Open-ended questions encourage discussion and give the answerer freer range to come up with information than in a closed-ended question.

Worker: What did you do when you heard Angie fall?

Client: (generally feel obligated to describe a series of behaviors)

Worker: How do you see the situation now?

OR

What would you like to do at this point?

Probing questions may be either open or closed-ended. They are questions designed to clarify the facts. They ask the reporter's questions: who, when, what, where, and how.

Client: She had those bruises on her when she came home from school.

Worker: When was that?

Client: Tuesday evening.

Worker: What did you say when you saw the bruises?

Client: I didn't say anything.

Worker: Who else saw her come home in that condition?

Questions are often used in non-productive ways in interviews. Workers need to be aware of some habitual ways of using questions that can be

threatening, devaluing, or apologetic. For example:

Don't you think you'd better stick to the agreement? (Or else!).

Why don't you follow through as you agreed? (You're inadequate.)

Let's review the agreement. How about it? (I'll back down, if you insist.)

Avoid: Is that O.K.? Why don't we _____? Do you agree? Do you mind telling me _____? Would you like to know why _____? Why did you _____?

"Why" questions are among the most provoking of defensive responses. They imply an attack by insisting on a defense of some action.

* This material was adapted from Basic Job Skills Training in Child Welfare Services: Trainees Coursebook, developed by the Texas Department of Human Resources, Protective Services for Children, Staff Development and Personnel Services.

UNIT 4

ROLE AND USE OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

The use of authority is an aspect of child welfare work that causes difficulty for many child welfare workers and clients. Often the client does not enter the system voluntarily. This results in the client sometimes feeling powerless and the worker feeling uncomfortable about the role and use of authority and power. The list below provides the worker with a check system for evaluating his/her use of authority and level of comfort in the role of child welfare worker.

	YES	NO
1. Do you avoid stating to the parents why you are there?	___	___
2. Do you focus on the alleged abuse or neglect to discover what is going on in the family?	___	___
3. I confront clients if they say something that is inconsistent or contradictory.	___	___
4. Do you focus by saying "I hate to keep asking you these questions, but it's a part of my job" ?	___	___
5. Do you avoid telling parents the results of an investigation?	___	___
6. Do you avoid questions that might be met with an angry response?	___	___
7. When confronted with uncooperative or hostile clients, I assert whatever power I can to control the situation.	___	___
8. When pressure is needed to get the client to improve, I have feelings that I have failed.	___	___
9. I dread going out on initial investigations.	___	___
10. I prefer to provide ongoing services rather than to complete investigations.	___	___
11. Do you feel unsure about legal issues when challenged by a client?	___	___
12. Do you feel a constant need to consult with your supervisor on case decisions?	___	___

The above statements or questions are not easily answered by yes or no. The beginning worker will have more yes answers than the more advanced worker,

however, levels of comfort vary from person to person. In order to effectively work in child welfare, the worker must establish a level of comfort in the use of authority without becomming overbearing and controlling in dealing with people and their problems. Periodic self evaluation should be conducted by the worker as a preventative measure in dealing with burn-out and becomming less effective as a worker. If the worker experiences ongoing problems in the use of authority whether it is legal authority or agency policy it will be experienced directly as stress and result in difficulty in decision-making and case planning.

It is important to accept power and authority in social work as a fact of life. Intervention by the social worker into the life of another person introduces the concept of power. Power in the relationship is the ability to control and influence others and its significance in professional relationships is considerable. Power in and of itself is neither good nor bad, it is simply there, and can be used either constructively or destructively. To understand power and authority in social work considerations must be in terms of the client or those for whom social services are provided.

Voluntary clients recognize their need for service and either directly or indirectly seek out the services of the social worker. The voluntary approach acknowledges the social worker as a helping resource and therefore in a position of power and authority. The social worker experiences a sense of gratification in being seen as in a position of power, in receiving such ego stroking.

The nonvoluntary client, the child abuser, the abused child, the foster child, the negligent parent, the child with behavioral problems are referred to social workers by various segments of society. These clients do not see the social worker on their own volition and they tend to view the social worker as representing controlling forces which seek to change their circumstances of living. The anger these clients feel against society is directed towards the worker. Thus the role of authority in a professional interaction has had an impact on both the client and the worker. How such authority is handled depends on the worker's recognition of:

The roles of the involved persons
The contract between the worker and client, and
the resources of the agency

A mutually trusting and productive relationship can best be developed by the recognition of the reality of the situation. Failure to recognize the role of power and authority in the professional relationship allows its uncontrolled influence to aggravate the difficulties in the interaction.

After the worker has evaluated her use of authority, she is ready to consider use of herself in face to face contact with the client. The following is an introductory sample of suggested responses to some usual remarks and questions.

SOME SUGGESTED RESPONSES TO SOME COMMONLY MADE REMARKS AND QUESTIONS

CLIENT	YOU
You have no right to be here	Mr. (or Ms.) Jones, I am required by law to be here.
Who told you we abuse our kids?	I'm not a liberty to share that information.
Are you gonna take my kids away?	My job is to protect your kids and try to keep your family together.
We use to hit Johnny, but we don't anymore (or we won't again)	I'm glad to hear that, I am required by law to visit the home and get an updated report. This shouldn't take much time.
All you want to do is take my kid.	My job is to help you, not split up your family.
I never touched the kid.	Perhaps not, but we are required to visit the home and get a report.
It's my husband, and I don't dare say anything, or he'll beat ME up!	I appreciate the position you're in and the stress you're under. Can we discuss this more inside?
He only does it when he's drunk.	That's often the case. Perhaps we can work together to find some way to deal with the drinking problem, too.
The kid taunted me into it.	Kids can be overwhelming sometimes, can't they? Maybe we can discuss it

	more inside and see what we might be able to do to prevent it from happening again.
I bet it was that nosy neighbor of mine!	No, we are not at liberty to say, but that really doesn't matter. The issue is what we do to help you, not who reported it.
	** Even if they guess the person who made the report, you are NEVER to reveal it, ALWAYS deny it. Otherwise you are placed in the position of violating confidentiality and can be sued.
I don't know what you're talking about. Somebody's just trying to get us in trouble.	Maybe so, But I'm still required by law to make this visit and turn in a report from you. If nothing is going on, the report will say so, and we won't have to bother you again.
I can't talk now.	When is a time that you can? Where would you prefer to talk, here or in my office?
I don't have to talk to you.	The law requires that I make a report from a home visit If you refuse, it will be placed in the courts hands, If you'll just let me visit with you a while, we may be able to avoid that.
Get away from here and don't ever come back!	Mr. (or Ms.) Jones, I'll leave if you insist. But I'd prefer to get the information I need from you than to have to turn it over to the courts. It would be much easier for you to just talk to me now.

The demeanor of constructive and positive authority can provide for the client a feeling of confidence that the worker knows what he is about, is secure in his position, and therefore merits attention and respect, which may be considered as the beginning phase of trust. What follows are some suggestive behaviors for the worker.

WORKER BEHAVIORS WHICH INVITE ATTACK	WORKER BEHAVIORS WHICH DISCOURAGE ATTACK
Posture conveys timidness and gives the message that one can be intimidated. Speaks in a soft, halting voice and conveys lack of certainty as to why she is there.	Speaks in a firm, well modulated voice. Has reason for intervention clearly in mind, and states the reason in a straight forward manner. Maintains neutral posture.
Communicates role confusion. Acts as "friendly visitor," "unwilling participant" (I have to do this; my supervisor sent me.), or "police interrogator."	Understands and states his right to intervene. Knows what information he needs and asks for it. Makes request for clarification in a non-threatening way.
Is inattentive to what is actually happening. Ignores danger signals such as: House shows signs of violence; open bottles of beer/ alcohol; erratic or agressive client behaviors; overt threats.	Picks up clues by knowing what to observe and being constantly aware of what is going on. Is sensitive to both feelings and behaviors. Asks client to repeat his understanding of what worker says in order to avoid distortions. If client is under influence of drugs or alcohol, he says so, and states that there is no purpose in communicating under these circumstances. Makes another appointment.
Demonstrates "pushy" posture which conveys a personal vendetta and stimulates defensiveness in client. Uses belligerent language and gestures. Responds to threats with counter threats.	Maintains disiplined awareness of own feelings. Depersonalizes client statements. Is empathetic. Reflects client's feelings. Conveys assertive "I" messages. Allows client physical distance. If threat is made in vague terms, asks client to be explicit. Explores consequences of threatened

Behavior with client. Does not become angry when personal remarks are made by client.

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UNIT 5

SELF AWARENESS IN COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERVIEWING

The following questions should provide the worker with a quick overview of issues that relate to his/her ability to function effectively as a child welfare worker. Read the question and fill in the space. After completing the list, review to see what themes emerge.

1. What emotions or attitudes do you seem to have difficulty expressing?

Emotions or attitudes which cause the worker distress or to experience difficulty in expressing will interfere with effective communication and the ability to form a relationship.

2. What have you tried to overcome these difficulties?

Once an individual recognizes that he/she feel that "all poor people are lazy" or "I have difficulty in letting people know I am angry" work should be focused on practicing directed change of these attitudes or managing to communicate feelings where appropriate.

3. What emotions or attitudes are easy for you to express?

Expressing emotions can be healthy and personally rewarding but may also create conflict and direct hostility towards the worker if the worker's expressions threaten the client.

4. Which emotions or attitudes do you have difficulty identifying when expressed by someone else? Which are easy for you to identify?

Do you avoid or deny anger when expressed by others? Have difficulty acknowledging compliments, etc.? Then you have normal reactions which are often socialized into everyone at an early age. Getting in touch with these attitudes and emotions aids the worker in the development of skills and recognition of areas in which he/she may feel vulnerable.

5. Can you communicate your interest in another person? Do you come across as a person who can be helpful?

These skills are essential in the development of good working relationships. The worker who holds himself in reserve and avoids involvement may be interpreted by the client as, lack of interest, hostility, or fear.

6. Can you correctly mirror the content of the other's statement?

Can you "hear" the feelings expressed along with the content or context of what has been said? This is a good listening and communication skill which can be

very useful in helping the worker who feels particularly threatened by the client or the situation. Many people "hear" the words but avoid or ignore the feelings expressed. The tone and pitch of voice and the campatibility of verbal and non-verbal content are important to listen for along with the words expressed.

7. Are you able to time your leading responses (influencing, advice giving, questioning) from your perception. What aspects of your verbal response behavior are of poor quality?

It is important to accurately communicate feelings and attitudes. For example, the worker should avoid the use of "I understand" as a show of empathy when he/she may not have a firm grasp of the problem as it not only cuts off information but may unintentionally alienate the client. If the worker feels strongly about a situation but communicates an easy-going attitude expectations may be misunderstood.

8. Are you free to respond with your personal reaction (feelings rather than beliefs or thoughts) to client systems expression, behavior or attitude? Are you free to express the reasons behind your personal reactions? Are you able to judge when these are appropriate?

The worker should be able to appropriately share personal feelings that contribute to relationship formation or working to change client problems. Do you avoid any personal contact or expression with clients? If so, it is important that the worker examine this and consider what effect this may have on practice.

9. Do you tend to categorize people? Do you tend to have similar reactions or feelings toward most people?

If the answer is yes, this may interfer with accurate understanding of your client and the life situations which bring him to the agency. While particular characteristics or diagnostic symptoms may hold generally true of a client group, the risk of over-generalization should be avoided.

10. Do you criticize quickly - or feel critical?

Individuals who criticize quickly may cause the client to withdraw or react with anger or hostility. Do you give praise when appropriate or only point out negative or destructive behaviors by the client. Some clients resort to withdrawal when criticism is constand in the worker's involvement on his/her case.

11. Do you minimize or universalize problems of others in an attempt to make them feel better? Do you feel a need to offer immediate solutions?

In an attempt to make the client feel better, the worker might try to state the "problem isn't as bad as you think" etc. This may result in the client feeling put down, or otherwise misunderstood. This may also indicate that the worker feels the need to resolve problems quickly either to help the client or to gain success for themselves. It may also indicate that the worker has some problems in dealing with conflict.

12. Do you tend to shy away from distressing problems? Do you feel a need to shy away from expressed feelings which are troublesome to you?

Essential to the role of the child welfare worker is the ability to deal with distress both in others and in themselves. Avoidance usually results in delaying appropriate intervention and may at times have life and death results in abuse cases. The ability to express troublesome feelings serves to enhance communication and to set examples for the client.

As the worker progresses through the 12 stages of questions it would be helpful to compare answers with how others perceive your functioning. It may be helpful to complete this exercise with another worker or your supervisor.

UNIT 6

INTERVIEWING AND PRACTICE TECHNIQUES IN WORKING WITH HOSTILE CLIENTS

There are a variety of interviewing techniques the child welfare worker may use in the development of a working relationship with the client. These techniques include:

- Focusing
- Partialization
- Universalization
- Recognition of difference
- Acceptance
- Education
- Logical discussion
- Relating to affect
- Demonstrating behavior
- Setting realistic limits
- Ventilation
- Summarization
- Direct intervention in environment
- Confrontation

Focusing

The worker should maintain the focus of the interview at all times with a clear understanding of the purpose and ultimate goal. For example, a client who has come in contact with the agency for abuse or neglect of a child may have great difficulty maintaining focus due to high levels of anxiety and fear. It is the worker's responsibility to redirect the subject when necessary, acknowledge the client's anxiety and finally refocus the interview by a repeat of the purpose of the interview. When clients feel anxiety, fear, or hostility they often wander from point to point, give extraneous information or avoid questions. The worker can empathize with the client while moving the interview forward. Statements such as:

> "I know this is difficult for you, but we must get back to how your child was injured."
>
> "Let's get back to the problems you say you are having since your husband lost his job."
>
> "It is not clear to me how your oldest daughter left home."
>
> "You stated on the phone that everything was going wrong. Can you tell me the two things that are causing you the most problems?"

These statements show concern for the client while moving the interview on to what may be painful issues.

Partiali ation

Clients who enter the child welfare system often present mutliple problems. They may be confused and/or overwhelmed by the environment, and/or their feelings. They also may feel an urgent need to solve or avoid the presenting problems. The worker should assist the client in partializing by 1) setting priorities, what are

the most urgent needs of the client and agency, 2) what can be realistically handled within the context of the agency, and 3) how to separate out and deal with one problem at a time.

Universalization

The worker uses this technique to point out that most individuals in the client's situation would have similar reactions. Clients often believe that they are different from most other people. A word of caution - this technique may be misunderstood by the client resulting in his feeling that the worker is minimizing his/her concerns.

Recognition of Difference

The worker and client may be from different socio-economic, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds. It is important to establish that the worker recognizes these differences and will make every attempt to understand the client if the backgrounds are different. This technique may also be used as a method of engaging the client around issues of special concern.

Acceptance

It is important to all people that they feel accepted. Acceptance of the client demonstrates an attitude of receptivity by the worker. It is important that the client feels comfortable enough with the worker to begin to face himself, the problem and the situation that brought the client and agency together.

Education

The sharing of information and provision of new knowledge become important aspects of work with clients especially when external agencies such as court systems and juvenile authorities of collaborating agencies are involved. In order to make informed decisions and contract for goal attainment, the client needs to be given information and facts. Education involves repetition and elaboration on the information in relation to new situations.

Logical Discussion

Organization of interview material to be covered in a given session is the responsibility of the worker. The maintainence of a flow in conversation and the integration of client's need and agency's purpose are achieved by the use of logical discussion.

Relating to Affect

Relating to affect is a method of engaging the client in the casework relationship and becomes important in specific treatment techniques and processes. The worker

may want to explore the affect, i.e., "You seem depressed today." or acknowledge and accept the affect, i.e., "Your housing problem puts you in a depressing situation." It is appropriate to name specific feelings or accept feelings only if the worker understands the feeling and there is a therapeutic reason for the client becoming aware and working through feelings.

Demonstrating Behavior

The worker should set the tone and expectations of counseling sessions by demonstrating expected behaviors such as openness, listening, and giving direct feedback. The worker may serve as a role model to the parent having difficulties in parenting. How to handle discipline, sharing and play activity with the child can all be readily demonstrated by the worker. A second method of demonstration may be role-playing with the client. If employment is a goal for the client, role playing what the client should expect may be useful for developing client skills.

Setting Realistic Limits

It is the worker's role to set the limits on the nature and type of contact that will take place in the interview situation. Contracting is one method that clearly states what is expected of each party in the casework relationship. If unrealistic goals or limits are set in the working relationship, the worker runs the risk of building-in failure.

Ventilation

The client may come to the relationship with many pent up emotions or reactions to current or previous life situations. The worker should encourage and/or allow the clients verbal and non-verbal expressions of anger, frustration, depression or simply a sharing of information and feelings.

Direct Intervention in the Environment

Modification of the environment may be accomplished by providing concrete services (housing, financial assistance, homemaker, parent aides, medical assistance, job placement, etc.) or assisting in the client's use of available community resources. When the client is overwhelmed by environmental problems, offering concrete services provide a beginning point for change both in physical surroundings and personal feelings of worth.

Summarization

The process of summarization involves the worker adding up for the client all feelings and facts shared in a given situation. This should be done in a concise, organized and purposeful manner. Summarization should enable the client to see

the interrelatedness of fact and feelings, analyze the positive and negative of a situation, develop clarity on the scope and nature of problems, and finally to share in the selection of alternative courses of action. The worker summarizes after sufficient exploration of information and sharing has taken place in the interview situation.

Confrontation

The goal of confrontation is to point out inconsistencies and/or contradictions in the client's affect, attitudes, behavior or information given during the interview and casework process. The goal is not for the worker to interpret or otherwise explain what the client means but to point up the problems with the client's functioning or ability to handle a problem.

When the Worker Feels Threatened

Several specific interviewing techniques should prove particularly useful when the worker deals with a difficult or uncooperative client.

Negotiating

The client who does not cooperate often reacts to a fear of authority or sense of loss of power. It is important that the worker aid the client by allowing any degree of autonomy possible comments such as:

> "I know this is difficult for you but it is a requirement that we get this information. Would you like to rest a minute before we go on?"
>
> "If you are able to keep the agreements we made two months ago, your children will be able to come home."

Ultimately, negotiating with a client should result in a verbal or written contract. Contracts are useful in the development of a working relationship and in the completion of a case plan.

Identification of Danger

While this is not a specific verbal technique, it is important that the worker develops strategies for insuring personal safety in potentially problem situations. Identify:

- Is the client usually loud or agressive in manner?
- Is there evidence of drug use such as alcohol or pills?
- Does the client move to cover the door as soon as the worker enters?
- Does the client use direct verbal threats that seem likely to be carried out?
- Is there evidence of a weapon or potential weapon?

The worker should develcp a "sense of judgement' with time and experience. If a new worker feels unusually uncomfortable, requesting an older worker to accompany her may be useful. If in a situation in which fear of safety arises leave as soon as it is reasonable or possible.

Cross Cultural Differences:

National welfare policy has to some extent recognized the impact of social, psychological, and cultural factors in the determinations regarding the provision of social services. The diversity of populations served by the public agencies far exceeds those in most sectors. Also the social work profession has been traditionally derived from practice where expertise in identifying social, cultural, and environmental factors in human functioning has received greated recognition than in any other field of professional practice.

Social workers have long believed that the way in which help is offered has a critical effect on the use the client is able to make of that help. That is why social work emphasized the use that the worker makes of herself in the helping relationship. The profession also recognizes that the relationship between worker and client can itself be growth-promoting or therapeutic, independent of any more concrete help which might be offered. The process of building a relationship of trust is a complex one which is influenced by the worker's and client's preconceptions and predispositions concerning each other. Since ethnicity is the basis of many of our preconceptions about others, it is important to consider the role of a culturally sensitive staff in the delivery of child welfare services. The issue discussed is related to promoting cultural sensitivity in social work staff.

Cultural sensitivity has two components. One is receptivity to the heritage, experience, and world-view of others. This presupposes acceptance of pluralism in society and of the salience of ethnicity in the lives of individuals. The second component is knowledge about American minority groups and their distinctive ethnic experience. Both components of cultural sensitivity can be promoted by agencies which want their staff (and also attorneys, judges, and other professionals) to be understanding of and empathetic with American minorities. The process of becoming culturally sensitive is described as learning progressively to recognize differences, accept differences, respect differences, and value differences. Acceptance occurs when the caseworker perceives and deals with the client as he is with all of his strenghts and weaknesses.

Conversely the use of gross generalizations and sterotyping will result in mistrust and concealment and a hostile unproductive relationship.

The following definitions are terms frequently used, particularly in teaching/learning regarding work with different cultural groups. These definitions should be of help to you in thinking about your own competance and to some extent as an aid to self awareness. That you will be working with individual families and groups from different social, cultural and racial groups is assumed.

Assimilation - The process of accepting the belief, attitudes and behaviors of a social group to which one is not a natural member.

Culturally Competent Worker - One who has:

1) knowledge and understanding of a problem
2) awareness and understanding of a minority group culture and community, and
3) the ability to appropriately use skills for assessment and treatment

Culture - The dynamic patterns of learned behaviors, values and beliefs exhibited by a group of people who share historical and geographical proximity.

Enculturation The initial process of receiving and incorporating the attitudes, behaviors, values and beliefs which make up the culture into which one is born.

Ethnocentric - To evaluate another culture in terms of a person's own cultural values.

Extended Family - A family in which more than two generations live in the same household.

Institutional Racism - A process based on attitudes, judgments, customs and traditions so deeply ingrained in a community's social structure that such racism cannot meaningfully be associated with specific acts of discrimination by specific persons.

Non-deficit - The description of those thinking processes which try to see the wholeness of human activity. Such thinking usually begins with an understanding of the socio-cultural

validity and integrity of the persons under discussion.

Racism - A belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial difference produces an inherent superiority of a particular race.

UNIT 7

THE SUPERVISORY PROCESS

Supervision

Kadushin (1976) describes the social work supervisor as:

> "... an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate on the job performance of the supervisees for whose work he is held accountable. In implementing this responsibility the supervisor performs administrative, educationa, and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to the agency's clients the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures."[1]

An important recognition is that the supervisee plays a key part in the supervision process.

Purpose of Supervision

To achieve the objective of the best possible service to clients, the effective supervisor expands her goals and perceives supervision as a process wherein she insures quality control by helping workers learn what they need to know in order to serve the client effectively. To achieve this objective, supervision should provide the worker:

- An opportunity to learn the skill necessary to carry out his/her functions.
- Help in exploring their own role.
- The support of a person with a more "objective" or more experienced viewpoint.
- An opportunity to continue to learn the knowledge base of social work and child welfare to support development of their skills.
- A buffer against whom to test out ideas.
- A personal tie in the agency through which accountability flows.
- A link in the agency for both client advocacy and agency change.
- Assistance in maintaining "quality control" for effective practice.
- A resource for helping supervisees grow and develop as professionals.
- A source for support and nuture of the worker's need for a climate conducive to job satisfaction and omit "burn out".
- An environment in which one can search for what ought to be.

Vital to new and old workers as well is the knowledge that she is not alone, that there is someone to go to when help is needed, someone with whom to share ideas, concerns, and visions for her clients, the agency, and the profession.

Functions of Supervision

Supervision can be divided into three major functions:

- administrative
- educational
- supportive

For the purpose of this manual we will focus more on the educational and supportive functions. However, it is important for the reader to remember that the administrative component is one that interrelates with the other two functions.

Within the framework, there are three areas of unique learning opportunities in a practice skills setting. They are:

- Continued development of professional practice skills.
- Developing self awareness to one's professional impact skills.
- Job management skills.

Administrative - Integrating new staff mambers

One of the primary functions that each supervisor faces is helping orient and integrate new staff members. This is particularly true in child welfare where the turnover in staff is frequent. Supervisors may face this experience with some ambivalence. She undoubtedly will feel very good at having another worker who will eventually take over a caseload. She will also need to set aside some special time in an already full schedule for the training of this worker.

When a worker is new and has limited or no work experience in the field of child welfare, supervision will necessarily take on the characteristics of the teaching role. In this respect there is a parallel between the beginning process when a new supervisor and worker come together and when the worker meets a new client. However, most supervisors when faced with this task of orienting a new staff person, rely heavily on how they were trained. Who of us has not been given three sets of manuals and put at a desk to read! read! read! Some additional techniques supervisors might want to consider are:

- Involving other staff in the process. Often other staff members are complimented to be asked to be a part of helping a new worker.
- Allowing new workers to observe and participate in case-consultations which can help them develop skills, and a better understanding of agency procedures and responsibilities.
- Demonstrating in the supervisor/worker relationship the concepts in the effective helping process - such as demonstration of empathy.
- Observation of interdisciplinary staffings.

Educational Function

The empahsis in the educational function is on helping the worker to develop an individual worker's professional skills. The supervisor can do this by:

- Helping the worker to assess her own areas of professional strengths and weaknesses.
- Developing a plan with the worker on how the supervisor can help the worker build on her strengths and to reduce those areas in which she has weaknesses.

Ways the supervisor can help the worker enhance her skills are:

- Transmitting knowledge
- Empathizing with the worker
- Providing a supportive environment where the worker is free to share her ideas, fears, etc.

An important, effective way for the supervisor to teach practice skills is by demonstrating them in the context of supervision, and there is an interesting parallel between this form of supervision and the work done with clients.

The parallel process of supervisor-worker and worker-client relationships are helpful in analyzing an illustration where the client feels overwhelmed by the problems and conveys this anxiety to the worker. The worker, in turn, feels overwhelmed and projects these feelings onto the supervisor. With appropriate behaviors, the supervisor will model the skills needed for dealing with the client's concerns. She has already begun to do this by recognizing the worker's feelings about the interview. The next step is to partialize the concerns so that the worker can begin to get a handle on some next steps. The following illustration is an excerpt from an interview between a child welfare supervisor and supervisee;

Supervisor: So you really have a number of things to deal with, just like the client. You're concerned about the possibility of violence with the husband, there is the abuse potential with mom under so much stress, and the eviction notice hanging overhead. Which one should we start with?

Worker: It's the husband who really has me scared.

Supervisor: Okay. Have you any contact with him yet?

Although partializing does not alone solve a problem, and each of these concerns is a bit overwhelming in itself, it at least provides the possibility of tackling them one at a time. Breaking large, overwhelming problems into their smaller components is a first step and an important beginning in the problem-solving process. In addition to helping to ease the worker's obvious anxiety, the supervisor conveys the message that there is some possible next step and that together, they will try to find out what the alternatives are.

Self Awareness and the Use of Authority

Whenever a client first comes into contact with a helping person, the tendency is for the client to perceive the worker as an authority figure. The client then transfers to this encounter feelings and perceptions derived from past experiences with people in authority. Often negative experiences are the most lasting in effect.

The worker must be sensitive to how the client's feelings about authority affects the social work relationship. She must also be prepared to discuss it directly (at the appropriate time) with the client. This process of transferring feelings about one person by the client is often referred to as transference.

In addition to the possibility of transference of feelings by clients, workers may also experience counter-transference which is the transference of feelings and perceptions of past experiences with other clients to the current client. Workers often identify with children in a family conflict situation because they view the family in a stereotypical fashion " the disorganized family," the "ghetto syndrome," "the abusing family," etc.

In cases where the agency does not have complete authority over the life of the client, such as in the case of child abuse, where the child is left in the home but the agency has statutory responsibility for the child, it is essential to deal with authority early in the relationship. Depressive, hostile clients may have stereotyped ideas of workers and therefore, the clients' underlying fear of the worker gets expressed as hostile behavior. A worker encountering this type of client should attempt to deal with the hositility directly as a start to contracting.

An effective way for the supervisor to teach practice skills is by demonstrating them in the context of supervision. There is an interesting parallel between this form of supervision and the work done with clients. Reflecting back on an earlier section of this document, we referred to the initial interview and suggested worker statements and questions leading to the making of the contract with the client. Parallel to the worker-client exchange in early interviews with the new worker, the supervisor clarifies the purpose of supervision and the role of the supervisor and moves then to the specifics such as "I will help you look at the way you work with clients" and then on to further detail to include the specifics of the worker's interaction with clients.

Working with a Crisis Situation

Workers often experience these concerns as overwhelming, presenting to the supervisor a number of issues, many with some impact on the other. The over-

whelmed feeling stems from the worker's needing to tackle so many of the problems, as it does form the nature of the problems themselves. The worker may feel immobilized, but however, when the supervisor "keeps his cool" she proceeds to demonstrate the only effective way to tackle a complexity of problems - break them down into their component parts and address them one at a time.

The skill of worker's partializing concerns is illustrated in the following report taken from a supervisory conference with a "crisis worker" in a child welfare agency who is herself in a crisis. The worker had just been transferred from "Adoptions" to direct contact work with clients in crisis situations. The work was new and she found it somewhat threatening. She came to conference disheveled and out of breath. The supervisor acknowledged her distress and;

Worker: This new Johnson case is a doozy! I don't know what to do with it or where to go next. Maybe we should consider apprehending this child.

Supervisor: Slow down a bit and let me have the details. What has you so concerned?

Worker: When I went to visit Mrs. Johnson after that telephone call about possible abuse, she broke down and told me her husband had threatened her with a knife. She was afraid he would lose his temper and beat her up. While we were talking, the two-year old was pulling at her dress and getting into her sewing things, and she grabbed him and shook him right in front of me.

Supervisor: That must have been upsetting!

Worker: In addition to the knife wielding husband and her shaking the kid, she tells me she has just received an eviction notice from the landlord and she really starts to cry. She told me her sister said she would take the kid for a while, but her sister's husband hates her and she is afraid to go there. She was really at a loss.

Supervisor: You must have felt that way too. What did you do?

Worker: I sympathized with her and told her I would think things over and see if I can come up with an answer. What I really was feeling was that it was quite a mess, and I wondered if I should be leaving the kid there tonight.

Supervisor: You probably also wished you were back in adoption.

Worker: (smiling for the first time): That's exactly what I thought!

Supportive Functions

Socialization into agency life. The socialization process takes into consideration knowledge that the worker will need as a base for sound practice. What he learns will be strongly influenced by his personal experiences and ideas and

his personality will always influence his work, but it will be subject to the discipline and objectivity that a professional needs to have. His personality does not change, rather he learns which kinds of actions and responses are helpful to those with whom he works and which actions get in the way of helping. Usually new workers experience situational anxiety in two areas: the task to be accomplished and the feelings related to participation in the situation. They are summarized in the following:

Task	Social-Emotional
What do I want?	Will I like my supervisor?
What can I learn?	Will she like me?
	Will it be safe?
	Will I have to change?[2]

Similar concerns face the supervisor who must engage the new worker in the learning process. Supervision then is a form of practice which requires knowledge, skills, certain values and attitudes. Part of each is the capacity to receive the supervisee as he is, to value him as a person of dignity and the skill to guide the process into a mutually respectful, comfortable and productive relationship. Also the engagement of the learners with each other and with the materials to be learned is one of the key factors in the process of changing and growing.

Supervision Forever

Since the beginning of social work in the United States, social workers have been debating the issues of what types of supervisors are needed and for how long. Social work is one of the few professions that requires "life time" supervision for its members. Some social workers feel that supervision should be a part of the workers training and then the worker should be autonomous after that. Others feel that the worker can use the supervisory process to continue to grow and develop their professional skills. With the new information being published on social work practice, knowledge and techniques, we may continue the practice for a long time.

This section on supervision is introductory in nature and intended to give a new worker some ideas regarding the role and expectations of the supervisee in the interactional process with the supervisor.

SUMMARY

The practitioner orchestrates a range of services combined with a therapeutic approach, and must be competent to extend himself as helper in a broad range of focal issues specified in the social casework practice system. The social casework practice system however is far reaching and subtly sensitive to the workers' unique way of applying the knowledge and developing skill in working with people. Therefore "practitioner knowledge of self" is essential.

This manual is intended to meet training needs for beginning level workers in one of the problem areas identified by practitioners in their day-to-day service activities. It was the practitioners' concerns with working with involuntary [illegible] which led to the development of this brief text.

References

1 Kadushin, Alfred. Supervision in Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.

2 Abels, Paul. The New Practice of Supervision and Staff Development. New York: Association Press, 1977.